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## Partisan Politics in Transition Economies

Principal Investigator: Timothy Frye

Although Communism strove to standardize all aspects of life, the politics and economies of post-Communist countries could not be more varied. The bustling streets of Prague are a far cry from the drab thoroughfares of Minsk. Moldova has become the poorest state in Europe, while Poland became an economic powerhouse. Democracies have emerged in Latvia and the Czech Republic, authoritarian regimes in Turkmenistan and Belarus.

*Partisan Politics in Transition Economies* seeks to explain the diversity of politics and economy in 25 post-Communist countries by examining the level of partisan politics. Where either neocommunists or liberals dominate, Frye argues, there is little polarization, and executives can push through pro-business or pro-state policies. Because there is little chance these policies will be reversed, companies -- whether private or state owned -- are likely to invest in a productive operation. This gives the executive a strong tax base.

Where neocommunists and liberals have roughly equal power, however, there is much more polarization. Neither private nor state companies invest because they fear reversal of executive policies. This leaves the executive with a much smaller tax base. It also means the executive tries to please both sides by backing "partial reforms" that include rapid privatization along with continuing subsidies for state-owned firms.

The book includes surveys of business elites and case studies of Bulgaria, Russia, Poland, and Uzbekistan. It concludes by identifying the roots of political polarization. *Partisan Politics in Transition Economies* is forthcoming in 2007.

Also forthcoming is an article, "The Political Economy of Constitutional Stability," which explores why presidents have dramatically expanded their powers in some post-Communist countries but not others. Findings suggest that expansions of presidential power are especially likely in countries with high levels of income inequality at low levels of democracy. Case studies include Poland, Croatia, Moldova, and Russia.



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